(Note: P = Press
M = Minister)

TL-6483-02

Transcript Press-Conference Minister Mochtar Kusumaatmadja 27 Feb.'87

P: Regarding the four East-Timorese students who obtained Portuguese passports, have they already left?

M: Oh no. We are looking for a way out regarding the procedure. Because they are Indonesian citizens according to us. Because integration has taken place, they did not go home when given the opportunity at the start. After the integration, thousands of people went home. At that time we gave the chance to people who did no longer want to stay here to go home. They did not use that chance, they stayed, we assumed they had no objection to become Indonesian citizens. Except for those people who declared that they remained Portuguese citizens, and maybe there were people who had come there. At that time there were people who stayed, and they even worked for the Regional Authorities. They were repatriated in the context of inofficial discussions between Portuguese and Indonesian representatives in Tokyo, in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding which exists between Portugal and us, there are two categories which may be repatriated namely: first, with the aim of family reunion. Second, former Portuguese civil servants. We mutually agreed on this. This has already been implemented too, many people have already left. This is organised with the aid of the ICRC, because Portugal has no representative here. These four do not fit into this. Therefore we are looking for a way out.

P: Will the Indonesian Government issue exit permits to them?

M: Well that is what we are trying to find a way out for. Because if an Indonesian wants to visit a country with which we have no diplomatic relations, there is a procedure for that. But it is possible that this matter has been turned into a political issue. So you must all understand that. For instance when they claim that they are Portuguese citizens. According to us they are Indonesian nationals. If we admit that they are Portuguese citizens, that means we deny integration. So a small thing can be blown up. I'm afraid that they have become political victims without being aware of it. It often happens that people become political victims without realising it. Reporters also can just write things without realising.

P: Sir do you have already news when these men will actually leave?

M: No our position is that we have an understanding with the Portuguese that what we agreed upon were two categories. They don't belong to these categories. So there's no ground to insist on anything. It is at our discretion, because they are Indonesian nationals.

P: But you made an agreement with the Dutch EEC and ASEAN?

M: There is no such agreement.

P: But after they obtained Portuguese passports, then the Portuguese did not claim them as their citizens.

M: A passport is not an indication of nationality. A passport is a travel document.

P: Is the position that these men were not allowed to leave?

M: No, their request is still under consideration.

P: (inaudible)

M: No they came to the Dutch Embassy, and the Dutch Embassy apparently promised them to obtain Portuguese passports for some reason, which of course we don't agree with that view. So the issue is political here, and the point they are trying to make is the integration is not well, that's all. I mean these chaps happened to be ... , first they were trying to make an issue that there was a humanitarian question, you know. But there was no basis for that because they were not persecuted. So, their going to Portugal is because they changed. First it is humanitarian now it is because they are citizens. And we must understand this, if a certain matter is turned into a political issue.

P: How about Portuguese passports (inaudible).

M: We have no diplomatic relations with them.

P: (inaudible)

M: I don't know, I think they do. Not, it's a larger issue. Do think for a moment, that it is important. I mean why are the Portuguese all of a sudden talking about humanitarianism. I mean, for 400 years their record was not particularly nice. A native Timorese couldn't even use the same road as a Portuguese. When the Portuguese came, he had to stand by the road and squat. Now, all of a sudden they have developed a great love for the Timorese.

P: Since Portugal is a member of the EEC and incidentally a large number of EEC members is part of the IGGI, and at the moment the IGGI Chairman happens to be in Indonesia, is there any connection with this matter?

M: I don't know, I don't think so. If Prioritas wishes to make a connection, go ahead.

P: Have there been efforts from the side of the Indonesian Government to persuade them not to leave?

M: This could be interpreted as interference or pressure from our side. If they want be part of a bigger game, that is up to them. But they must also be prepared to bear the consequences, that is to wait or whatever.

: We understand there is a concern for humanitarian things and all that. So the first thing when this came up with the Dutch during ASEAN was whether they were persecuted because in that case there would be a valid reason. So, we told the Dutch. In that case then is a question of asylum. And if that is the basis of the request, then there is ground. But then we checked, there were no basis at all, you see. And then they went back to the campus and that was not true also, what was alleged that they had to return to East Timor. And they admitted that even before they carried out this plan, they had been in contact with a foreign reporter here who then broadcast the news. So, there are indications that this is planned, you see. And any story to discredit Indonesia always finds a ready audience.

P : (inaudible).

M : We don't want to keep them. But if the issue is made that they go as Portuguese nationals, then it becomes a larger issue. As we said, if you're ready and said so to the Dutch to let them go if they were really being persecuted. Because then it is a humanitarian issue. But then later they changed the story, because there was no basis for that. Although two people were involved in possession of illegal arms. But because they were Timorese, they were dealt with rather leniently. You try to have arms illegally in Kuala Lumpur and see what happens to you. Okay? So this is a case of our getting trouble because we are too lenient with them. And frankly, I have no use for these people. They can go as far as we are concerned. But because it's been made a political issue by saying that they're Portuguese nationals, now it becomes difficult, because then it's tied up with integration.

P: Who do you mean are trying to manipulate them for this issue?

M: Oh that is easy. The people who are inciting them.

P: Are those the Dutch or ...?

M: Why don't you find out?
Reporters are usually much better in finding out such things. Because they themselves admitted without being asked or anything to the Dutch Ambassador that before that, they had already phoned a foreign correspondent, I will not mention the Press-agency, which then published it.

M : Now, my reason for saying this is because they admitted freely to the Dutch Ambassador that even before the event, they went to the Embassy, that they had contacted and informed a foreign correspondent here. And that is how the news got abroad. I mean if these were innocent young men these things should not have happened. We have a creditable record as far as genuine humanitarian cases are concerned. But when humanitarian issues are manipulated for political purposes, then it becomes a different matter. They were allowed to go back to campus, they were allowed to continue their studies. Again I say, try to have, possess arms illegally in Malaysia, see what happens to you, or narcotics for that matter. So, maybe we should get tougher and people should be less naive, you know, more carefull when somebody approaches you to do this and that, you know. And Embassies should also be much more careful in admitting people. Like those four Irianese people, or how many were there last year. They were not really political refugees. That's why the Dutch asked them they have to reimburse the tickets now. Because otherwise these Embassies become a place to get free tickets.

P: This has been the umpteenth time that the Dutch Embassy took the responsibility, for instance some time ago as well as now.

M: Yes, I also told them to be cautious, because that is not the reason why we establish an Embassy. Because there are many people who want to go away. On Java, on Sumatra, just commit anything, this or that movement, enter an Embassy and get a ticket. Go ahead!

P: So has the Dutch Embassy been cautioned to be careful in accepting this request?

M: Yes, they already know that, it is not necessary to caution them. That would involve too much work.
So, in the beginning there was a genuine concern that they were persecuted, both on the part of the Dutch Embassy and the Indonesian Government. That's why initially there was a willingness, not an agreement. A willingness on our part if it could be proven that they were persecuted that we would let them go. We would not be in the way of letting them go. But then it would be a question of asylum. Now the Dutch then became careful because of the past experience and because of the possibility of abuse of asylum. And asylum always creates problem for the host government. But they asked us to check, you see. And then we checked, and as it happened they were not persecuted or even prosecuted, although it was found out later that two of them were involved in illegal arms possession case but that case was dismissed.

P : (inaudible)

M : But we didn't know that they were the same people. Later we found out that these were the same people that were involved in arms, two of them. Because we don't walk around with their portraits in our wallet, so when they said we have four people ...(inaudible)

M : We didn't know at that time that the Dutch said four people, that these two were involved in the illegal arms case. But when we got the name, we checked the name, and then we knew that two of them were involved, two were completely new people. But the surprising fact is, and you better write it down and be quoted, that by their own admission they had beforehand contacted a foreign correspondent.

P : The man in here?

M : I don't know. And made it broadcast.

P : A radio correspondent?

M : It's not you. I'll find it a very cynical case of manipulating things

you know, humanitarian, nationality for political purposes.

P: Earlier Pak Mochtar said that the case is being processed, so that means there is still a possiblity they will get it.

M: It is possible. Because we don't need such people. The more of their kind that leaves that better. But if it is said that they leave as Portuguese people, that would be the same as saying that the integration is not valid. So that's where the problem lies.

P: So how can they leave?

M: By not insisting on Portuguese passports.

P: Does the Government prohibit its nationals to change nationalities?

P:(inaudible)

M: That is an announcement for people who have become nationals through naturalisation. There are conditions for that, you have to have lived there for 5 years. From time to time such a list of people is published.

P: So that means there are no people from here?

M: No. At the most they become residents first, and only get a green card. After five years they can apply for naturalisation, and become a citizen. Well, that is what is published, a list of new citizens. You can look for yourself whether your name is on it.

P: Indonesian reporters do not want to leave. They love their country.

P: So they are allowed to leave Indonesia but on an Indonesian passport, is that it?

M: I did not say that. It is still being processed.

P: But you said not on a Portuguese passport?

M: Yes, the problem now is that they cannot leave under the existing categories, which were agreed between Portugal and Indonesia based on inofficial discussions in New York. So the difficulty now is to try and fit them in one of these categories. Maybe if they have relatives there, it could be done. As government officials, it is clear that is not possible.

P: Is there a possibility of normalisation of diplomatic relations between Indonesia-Portugal under these circumstances?

M: If they are willing to recognise the integration of East Timor, it is settled, I think.

P: Is that the only condition?

M: Yes.

P: The inofficial discussions, did they take place in Tokyo or in New York?

M: In New York.-

P : Mengenai empat mahasiswa Tim-Tim yang dapat paspor Portugal, apa sudah berangkat?

M : Oh, tidak. Itu sedang dicarikan jalan keluar prosesnya bagaimana. Karena mereka adalah warga Indonesia, menurut kita. Karena integrasi sudah terjadi, mereka tidak ikut pulang pada waktu diberi kesempatan permulaan itu. Setelah integrasi, kan beribu-ribu orang pada pulang itu. Pada waktu itu kita berikan kesempatan pada mereka yang tidak mau tinggal lebih lama disini untuk pulang. Itu mereka tidak mereka gunakan, mereka tinggal, kita anggap tidak keberatan menjadi warga negara Indonesia. Kecuali mereka yang menyatakan tetap jadi warga negara Portugal, dan mungkin juga ada yang datang. Ada yang tinggal waktu itu, bahkan ada yang bekerja di Pemerintah daerah. Mereka itu dipulangkan dalam rangka pembicaraan tidak resmi antara wakil Portugal dan Indonesia di Tokyo, sesuai Memorandum of Understanding yang ada antara Portugal dan kita, ada dua kategori yang bisa dipulangkan yaitu: satu, untuk tujuan penyatuan keluarga (family reunion). Dua, adalah untuk former, bekas pegawai negeri Portugal. Ini disepakati bersama itu. Itu sudah ditangani juga, itu sudah banyak juga yang pergi. Itu penyelenggaraannya dengan bantuan ICRC, karena Portugal tidak punya wakil disini. Yang empat ini adalah diluar itu. Jadi sedang dicari jalan keluarnya bagaimana.

P : Apakah Pemerintah Indonesia nantinya akan memberikan exit permit kepada mereka?

M : Ya, itulah yang lagi dicari jalan keluarnya bagaimana. Karena orang Indonesia kalau mau keluar ke negara yang kita tidak punya hubungan diplomatik, kan ada caranya. Tapi mungkin ini soal dijadikan issue politik. Jadi kalian juga mesti ngerti ini. Misalnya di-claim lalu bahwa mereka itu warga Portugal. Menurut kita mereka adalah warga negara Indonesia. Kalau kita akui mereka warga Portugal, kan kita membantah integrasi. Jadi soal kecil bisa jadi gede. Saya khawatir mereka menjadi korban politik tanpa disadari. Sering orang itu jadi korban politik tanpa disadari. Wartawan juga bisa nulis-nulis tanpa disadari.

P : Sir, do you have already news when these men will actually leave?

M : No, our position is that we have an understanding with the Portuguese that what we agreed upon were two categories. They don't belong to these categories. So, there's no ground to insist to anything. It is at our discression, because they are Indonesian nationals.

P : But you made an agreement with the Dutch, EEC and ASEAN?

M : There's no such agreement.

P : Tapi setelah mereka mendapatkan paspor Portugis, kan Portugis tidak meng-claim bahwa itu warganya.

M : Paspor kan bukan tanda kewarganegaraan. Paspor adalah surat perjalanan.

P : Ia the position that these men were not allowed to leave?

M : No, their request is still under consideration.

P : (inaudible)

M : No, they came to the Dutch Embassy, and the Dutch Embassy apparently promised them to obtain Portuguese passport, for some reason, which of course we don't agree with that view. So the issue is political here, and the point they are trying to make is the integration is not well, that's all. I mean these chaps happened to be ... , first they were trying to make an issue that there was a humanitarian question, you know. But there was no basis for that because they were not persecuted. So, the going to Portugal is because they change. First is humanitarian now is because they're citizens. Dan kita harus mengerti ini, kalau satu masalah dijadikan issue politik.

P : How is Portuguese passport? (inaudible)

M : We have no diplomatic relations with them.

P : (inaudible)

M : I don't know, I think they do. No, it's a larger issue. Do think for a moment, that it is important. I mean why are Portuguese all of a sudden talk about humanitarianism. I mean, for 400 years their record was not particularly nice. A native Timorese couldn't even use the same road as a Portuguese. When the Portuguese came, he had to stand by the road and squat. Now, all of a sudden they developed a great love for the Timorese.

P : Karena Portugal merupakan anggota MEE dan kebetulan sebagian besar anggota MEE juga masuk dalam kelompok IGGI dan sekarang ketua IGGI sedang berkunjung ke Indonesia, apakah ada sangkut pautnya masalah ini?

M : Saya tidak tahu, saya kira tidak. Kalau Prioritas mau menghubungkan, ya silahkan.

P : Apakah ada usaha dari Pemerintah Indonesia untuk memberikan pengertian kepada mereka supaya tidak pergi?

M : Itu bisa diartikan kita campur tangan atau menekan. Kalau mereka mau menjadi bagian dari satu permainan besar, terserah. Tapi mereka juga harus menanggung konsekuensinya, artinya menunggu atau bagaimana. .

P : We understand there is a concern for humanitarian things and all that. So the first thing when this came up with the Dutch during ASEAN was whether they were persecuted, because in that case there would be a valid reason. So, we told the Dutch. In that case then is a question of asylum. And if that is the basis of the request, then there is ground. But then we checked, there were no basis at all, you see. And then they went back to the campus and that was not true also, what was alleged that they had to return to East Timor. And they admitted that even before they carried out this plan, they had been in contact with a foreign reporter here who then broadcast the news. So, there are indications that this is planned, you see. And any story to discredit Indonesia always finds a ready audience.

P : (inaudible).

M : We don't want to keep them. But if the issue is made that they go as Portuguese nationals, then it becomes a larger issue. As we said, if you're ready and said so to the Dutch to let them go if they were really being persecuted. Because then it is a humanitarian issue. But then later they changed the story, because there was no basis for that. Although two people were involved in possession of illegal arms. But because they were Timorese, they were dealt with rather leniently. You try to have arms illegally in Kuala Lumpur and see what happens to you. Okay? So this is a case of our getting trouble because we are too lenient with them. And frankly, I have no use for these people. They can go as far as we are concerned. But because it's been made a political issue by saying that they're Portuguese nationals, now it becomes difficult, because then it's tied up with integration.

P : Siapa yang Bapak maksudkan dengan menggunakan mereka untuk issue itu?

M : Oh, mudah saja. Orang-orang menghasut.

P : Apakah itu Belanda atau ... ?

M : Why don't you find out? Wartawan biasanya lebih baik cari-cari yang begitu. Sebab dia sendiri mengaku tidak ditanya tidak apa sama Dubes Belanda bahwa dia sebelumnya sudah telepon sama koresponden asing, saya tidak sebut press agency-nya, yang lalu menyiarkannya.

P : (inaudible)

M : Now, my reason for saying this is because they admitted freely to the Dutch Ambassador that even before the event, they went to the Embassy, that they had contacted and informed a foreign correspondent here. And that is how the news got abroad. I mean if these were innocent young men these things should not have happened. We have a creditable record as far as genuine humanitarian cases are concerned. But when humanitarian issues are manipulated for political purposes, then it becomes a different matter. They were allowed to go back to campus, they were allowed to continue their studies. Again I say, try to have, possess arms illegally in Malaysia, see what happens to you, or narcotics for that matter. So, maybe we should get tougher and people should be less naive, you know, more carefull when somebody approaches you to do this and that, you know. And Embassies should also be much more careful in admitting people. Like those four Irianese people, or how many were there last year. They were not really political refugees. That's why the Dutch asked them they have to reimburse the tickets now. Because otherwise these Embassies become a place to get free tickets.

P : Ini sudah kesekian kalinya Kedubes Belanda menjadi pihak yang memberi jaminan, misalnya beberapa waktu lalu maupun yang kini.

M : Ya, saya pun bilang kepada mereka hati-hatilah, karena bukan untuk itu kita mendirikan Embassy. Sebab banyak sekali orang yang ingin pergi. Di Jawa, di Sumatera, bikin saja macam-macam, gerakan ini itu, masuk Embassy nanti dapat tiket. Silahkan!

P : Lalu apakah Kedubes Belanda sudah diperingatkan supaya bijaksana dalam menerima permintaan tersebut?

M : Ya, mereka juga tahu begitu, tidak usah diperingatkan. Bisa kewalahan dong. Mereka sudah jauh lebih hati-hati. So, in the beginning there was a genuine concern that they were persecuted, both on the part of the Dutch Embassy and Indonesian Government. That's why initially there was a willingness, not an agreement. A willingness on our part if it could be proven that they were persecuted that we would let them go. We would not be in a way of letting them go. But then it would

be a question of asylum. Now the Dutch then became careful because of the past experience and because of the possibility of abuse of asylum. And asylum always creates problem for the host government. But they asked us to check , you see. And then we checked, and as it happened they were not persecuted or even prosecuted, although it was found out later that two of them were involved in illegal arms possession case but that case was dismissed.

P : (inaudible)

M : But we didn't know that they were the same people. Later we found out that these were the same people that were involved in arms, two of them. Because we don't talk around with their portraits in our wallet, so when they said we have four people ...(inaudible)

M : We didn't know at that time that the Dutch said four people, that these two were involved in the illegal arms case. But when we got the name, we checked the name, and then we knew that two of them were involved, two were completely new people. But the surprising fact is, and you better write it down and be quoted, that by their own admission they had beforehand contacted a foreign correspondent.

P : The man in here?

M : I don't know. And made it broadcast.

P : A radio correspondent?

M : It's not you. I'll find it a very cynical case of manipulating things you know, humanitarian, nationality for political purposes.

P : Tadi Pak Mochtar mengatakan masih diproses kasusnya, jadi berarti masih ada kemungkinan mereka memperolehnya.

M : Bisa saja. Sebab kita kan tak perlukan orang-orang yang begitu. Lebih banyak orang yang begitu pergi lebih baik. Tetapi kalau itu dikatakan dia pergi sebagai orang Portugal, itu kan kita seperti mengatakan integrasi itu tidak berlaku. Jadi disitu saja nyangkutnya.

P : Lalu bagaiman mereka dapat pergi?

M : Jangan dijadikan syarat itu Portuguese passport.

P : Apa ada larangan Pemerintah bagi warganya untuk bertukar warga negara lain ?

P : (inaudible)

M : Itu kan pengumuman bagi mereka yang sudah jadi warga negara dengan naturalisasi. Itu ada syaratnya, tinggal disana 5 tahun. Dari waktu ke waktu diumumkan list orang-orang itu.

P : Jadi tidak ada orang dari sini Pak?

M : Tidak. Paling-paling jadi residence dulu, cuma dapat kartu hijau. Kalau sudah lima tahun bisa apply naturalization, bisa jadi citizen. Lha, itu yang diumumkan, list of new citizens. Kamu boleh lihat apa nama kamu ada disitu atau tidak.

P : Wartawan Indonesia tidak ada yang mau pindah. They loved their country.

P : Jadi mereka ini boleh meninggalkan Indonesia tapi dengan paspor Indonesia begitu?

M : Saya tidak mengatakan begitu. Itu sedang diproses.

P : Tapi tadi Bapak bilang tidak on a Portuguese passport?

M : Ya, soalnya sekarang adalah bahwa mereka tidak bisa berangkat berdasarkan kategori-kategori yang ada, yang telah disetujui antara Portugal dan Indonesia berdasarkan pembicaraan tidak resmi di New York. Jadi susahnya lalu sekarang cari masuk kategori apa, begitu. Barangkali kalau ada familinya disana, barangkali bisa. Kalau Government Official, jelas tidak.

P : Apa ada kemungkinan normalisasi hubungan diplomatik dinormalisir antara Indonesia - Portugal dalam kondisi seperti ini?

M : Kalau mereka mengakui integrasi Timor Timur, selesai, saya kira.

P : Apa itu saja syaratnya?

M : Ya.

P : Pembicaraan tidak resmi itu di Tokyo atau New York?

M : New York.